United Nations S/2015/668

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 August 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 26 August 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the twenty-third monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present letter covers the period from 23 July to 22 August 2015.

With respect to the destruction of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities, I note that four of the seven hangars have now been verified by OPCW as having been destroyed and that all five underground structures have been verified as destroyed. I look forward to progress in the destruction of the remaining three hangars, bearing in mind the prevailing security environment.

At the time of my previous letter to you, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team was carrying out its tenth visit to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Team concluded the visit on 31 July 2015, having engaged in further technical consultations and interviews, as well as having shared the analytical results of samples taken during its eighth and ninth visits to the country. I take note of the planned eleventh visit of the Team to the Syrian Arab Republic at the end of August 2015.

As I stated in my previous letter, the activities of the OPCW fact-finding mission investigations of allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic are continuing. I welcome the safe return to The Hague of the fact-finding mission team, which had undertaken a second deployment to Damascus from 1 to 16 August 2015 in order to look into information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to learning about the findings of the mission.

On 7 August 2015, on the heels of ongoing allegations regarding the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Security Council adopted resolution 2235 (2015), by which I was requested, in coordination with the Director-General, to submit to the Council, for its authorization, recommendations, including elements of terms of reference, regarding the establishment and operation of an OPCW-United Nations joint investigative mechanism. The objective of the mechanism is to identify, to the greatest extent feasible, individuals, entities, groups or Governments who were perpetrators, organizers or sponsors of, or who were otherwise involved in, the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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I have reiterated on many occasions my firm view that the use of such weapons, by any parties to the conflict, is intolerable and that those responsible must be held accountable. I welcome this decision by the Security Council and have been working in close coordination with the OPCW Director-General in this regard. You will soon receive the recommendations requested, in accordance with operative paragraph 5 of resolution 2235 (2015).

I would be grateful if you could urgently bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council. My report covers the period from 23 July to 22 August 2015 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

Note by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, also adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015).

4. This, the twenty-third monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions, and includes information relevant to the period from 23 July to 22 August 2015.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

5. Progress within the reporting period by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) The destruction activities at the 12 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) in the Syrian Arab Republic continued during the reporting period. Four of the seven aircraft hangars have now been verified by the Secretariat as destroyed. Verification of the recent destruction of the fifth hangar is pending due to some residual mechanical work that remains to be completed. At the moment, two hangars are inaccessible due to the security situation. As reported previously, the Secretariat has verified all five underground structures as destroyed.

(b) On 18 August 2015, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its twenty-first monthly report (EC-80/P/NAT.2, dated 18 August 2015) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

(c) The Syrian authorities have continued to extend the necessary cooperation in accordance with the implementation of subparagraph 1(e) of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

6. Significant progress has been made in destroying all the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, which were removed from its territory in 2014. A combined total of 98.8% of all declared chemical weapons has been verified as destroyed, which includes the isopropanol previously destroyed in the Syrian Arab Republic, 100% of the Category 1 chemicals, and 93.7% of the Category 2 chemicals. Also, facilities in Finland and Germany have destroyed all effluents produced by the neutralisation process of sulfur mustard and DF that took place on board the United States vessel MV Cape Ray. With regard to the remaining quantity of the Category 2 chemical, hydrogen fluoride (HF), a total of 48.7% has been destroyed. Having now ensured the safe storage of the badly corroded HF cylinders, Veolia ES Technical Solutions, LLC in the United States of America is making preparations to further process and destroy the remaining quantity of HF. The Secretariat will continue to brief States Parties in The Hague on this activity, which is expected to be completed near the end of 2015.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

7. In the context of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, cooperation with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has continued and three OPCW staff members were deployed as part of that Mission as at the cut-off date of this report.

8. The Director-General has continued to communicate with senior representatives of the States Parties hosting a destruction facility or providing assistance with the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, and with senior officials of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

9. The Secretariat and the Syrian authorities have maintained the ongoing cooperation on outstanding issues regarding the Syrian initial declaration, as encouraged by the Council at its Seventy-Sixth Session (paragraph 6.17 of EC-76/6, dated 11 July 2014). During its tenth visit to the Syrian Arab Republic, which occurred from 19 to 31 July 2015, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continued its technical consultations and interviews with key principals from the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including discussions with the Syrian authorities on the analytical results of the samples taken during the DAT's previous site visits. Additional samples, which were taken during the DAT's tenth visit, were transported to the OPCW Laboratory, re-packed in the presence of the Syrian National Authority representatives, and distributed to designated laboratories for analysis. The DAT will continue its consultations during its next visit, which is currently scheduled to take place from 28 August to 12 September 2015.

10. As previously reported, the special monitoring system equipment has been installed at the four underground structures for which monitoring was originally planned in accordance with Notes EC-M-40/DG.2/Add.1 (dated 20 July 2014) and EC-M-43/DG.1/Rev.1 (dated 21 July 2014), and is functioning as expected.

Supplementary resources

11. The total contributions of EUR 50.3 million in the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons and the contributors thereto remain unchanged from the previous report.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

12. On 7 August 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2235 (2015), authorising the establishment of a Joint Investigative Mechanism. The resolution requests the UN Secretary-General, in coordination with the OPCW Director-General, to submit to the Security Council for its authorisation, within 20 days of the adoption of this resolution, recommendations, including elements of Terms of Reference, regarding the establishment and operation of an OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic where the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) determines or has determined that a specific incident in the Syrian Arab Republic involved or likely involved the use of chemical weapons.

13. The Secretary-General transmitted the resolution to the Director-General on 10 August 2015. In accordance with the Agreement Concerning the Relationship Between the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the resolution was brought to the attention of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention through a communication dated 11 August 2015 (S/1302/2015), followed by a briefing held the next day. At the time of reporting, the OPCW and the United Nations are engaged in drafting the recommendations for submission by the Secretary-General to the Security Council.

14. As mentioned in the previous monthly report, the FFM continues its analysis of information collected during its latest missions. This now includes the second deployment to Damascus (from 1 to 16 August 2015) to look into information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic in December 2014 and thereafter. Activities during this mission included interviewing a further 20 witnesses and visiting a hospital and a research institution within the Damascus City. Upon completion of this work, the findings will be submitted to the Director-General, who will subsequently share the results with States Parties and also include them in the monthly reports that are submitted to the United Nations Security Council, as required under EC-M-48/DEC.1.

Conclusion

15. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will continue to be on the destruction of the three remaining aircraft hangars. The DAT and the FFM will also continue their work in the Syrian Arab Republic.